

Elkridge Patch

Politicians Pledge to Stop Freight Transfer Facility in Hanover

Political leaders told more than 150 residents they supported efforts to stop an intermodal train facility from being located at Hanover and Race Roads.

By Elizabeth Janney | April 23, 2011

Nearly a month after CSX and Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) announced that four sites in central Maryland were under consideration for a freight transfer facility, Elkridge residents pleaded with elected officials to remove their neighborhood from the list.

Organized by the Greater Elkridge Community Association, the residents' April 21 meeting with elected officials drew more than 150 people who made it clear they want to stop the proposed intermodal facility from being built near them.

Mitch Buchman, who lives in Patapsco Ridge, said the site at Hanover and Race Roads needed to be removed from the list because the facility would reduce property values and be a safety risk. He also said there had been a lack of transparency about how the process worked.

A resident on Race Road agreed.

"We're asking you, our elected representatives, our legislators, who by the nature of the legislature control public monies and what they get spent on, to put a stop to this process now, so that our property values and our quality of life are not in jeopardy," said Drew Roth.

Sen. Edward Kasemeyer, who chairs Maryland's budget and taxation committee, said legislators backed the residents. "We are totally supportive of your position and will do anything possible and anything conceivable to stop this project," he said.

Four of the five elected officials who spoke at the meeting said they were in agreement with residents' dismay over Hanover being selected as one of four sites in central Maryland for the project, out of a list that started with a dozen possibilities.

But David Nitkin, spokesman for Howard County Executive Ken Ulman, said Ulman "wants all impacts to be mitigated."

Although MDOT has told the public that four sites are being considered, Kasemeyer and Delegate James Malone said that by July, the list would be narrowed to two.

MDOT spokesman Jack Cahalan said that "it is not unusual to have discussions with an agency, like in this case, the Federal Railroad Administration, that could lead to paring down a list of candidate sites." He added, "However, this could only happen after you have done the initial legwork to identify and document issues and potential impacts of specific sites."

Howard County Councilwoman Courtney Watson said she was concerned by the fact that Patapsco State Park is adjacent to the Hanover site.

U.S. Sen. Ben Cardin's spokeswoman, Heather Campbell, reminded residents that Cardin is on the committee that has oversight of the Environmental Protection Agency, which must sign off on the intermodal project.

"We will do everything we can to make sure this site is kaput," Campbell said.

A public workshop about the rail project is scheduled for Wednesday, April 27, at 7 p.m. at Elkridge Landing Middle School. Maryland Department of Transportation and CSX officials will have poster boards explaining the project and will be on hand to answer questions.